

Tern Island Volunteer Positions
General Requirements and Preferred Qualifications
Tern Island Field Station, French Frigate Shoals (Kanemiloha'i)
Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuge
Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument

Physical Requirements: Volunteers should be able to work well with a small team in a professional and safe manner, and be flexible on work assignments. Volunteers should be in good physical condition, and be able to work outdoors in a hot environment; be able to lift 75 lbs; be able to carry 50 lbs; be able to swim more than 200 yards in water >30' deep; be able to walk at least 3 miles at a time in the sun; and be willing to participate in deep water small boating operations. Volunteers must have vision that is correctable to 20/20, with sufficient color perception to differentiate between colored bird bands.

Volunteers should be prepared to work very closely with seabirds, be dirty and smelly, work hard, and enjoy being outside in the sun and wind. All staff and volunteers work 6 day/week, 48 hours per week, with occasional night hours. Working hours, particularly during the day, may vary drastically depending on the weather.

Those with special food needs should strongly consider whether they come to Tern Island. While we try to accommodate food needs, food is limited to what is on-island, and we may not be able to accommodate severe, special, or very limiting food needs – your special foods simply may not be available, or available in sufficient quantity. In addition, those who experience strong food allergies must consider the possible consequences of delayed or no evacuation.

While we are happy to accommodate special needs to the degree safety will allow, some special needs may not be met on Tern. Any medical condition which may require evacuation in less than 24 hours is not compatible with likely evacuation times from Tern, for example. Mental, physical, or social conditions which require regular treatment may also not be suitable for the long stays and low but chronic stress that may be encountered while serving on Tern. Keeping our staff and volunteers safe is our number one priority!

No alcohol is allowed on the island at any time. Fresh water is limited, so while staff and volunteers are allowed to wash in the ocean daily, fresh water showers are usually limited to weekly. Do not expect to have a fresh water shower every day.

Work Requirements: All staff and volunteers are expected to their share of the cooking and cleaning, according to schedule. Everyone is expected to help with maintenance chores, such as bicycle and boat cleaning, and cleaning the barracks, including bathrooms. Wildlife monitoring is certainly the largest part of life on Tern, but is definitely not the only part. If you enjoy being a jack-of-all-trades, you are more likely to enjoy life at Tern.

Safety Requirements: Due to the remoteness of the atoll, safety is a major factor for everyone at Tern. All dangerous horseplay, alcohol, or drug use is prohibited. Applicants are expected to share all relevant medical information with the Refuge Manager, for the safety of both the applicant and others at Tern. While confidential information will be protected, information that is pertinent to the welfare of the team (e.g., diabetic needs, allergic reactions to environmental stimulus) may be shared with team members when needed for safety preparedness.

Health Requirements: Because of the delay and difficulty of evacuation from a remote island, good to excellent general health is required. Regular physical exertion in hot sun, pouring rain, and open water conditions is expected. No one should come to Tern if they have a medical or other conditions which requires regular treatment (e.g., severe allergies, treatment for heart conditions, suppressed immune system), or is likely to require medical or mental treatment, or evacuation. Timely evacuation is not guaranteed, nor is advanced medical help. You cannot depend on evacuation for your medical or mental needs. All staff and volunteers must meet general health guidelines listed above, for their own safety, as well as safety of the group and potential rescuers.

Work Environment: All remote island positions require both outdoor and office work. The office is adequately lighted, heated, and ventilated. Weather extremes will be encountered in outdoor work, including hot sun, strong winds, and rain. All positions at Tern Island require occasional travel and work in small boats for periods of up to a full work day at a time. Volunteers are expected to conduct duties in a safe and orderly manner so as not to endanger self, fellow workers, or property.

All personnel are expected to be sensitive to the fragile nature of the island and its inhabitants. While safety has first priority, regular biological monitoring is second. All persons within the Monument must adhere to safety, biological protection, and cultural respect at all times, or will be required to leave.

The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands are remote islands accessible by ship. Tern Island is sometimes, but not always, accessible by small aircraft.

Travel Requirements: We generally select four biological volunteers and one maintenance volunteer for six month tours on Tern Island, although occasionally three-month tours are allowed. Volunteers are responsible for their own travel to Honolulu, Hawaii. Travel to and from Tern Island from Honolulu is provided by USFWS. We do not provide or pay stipends to volunteers, but provide a private room (with common bathroom) and meals while on island. A passport, current TB test results on file, and related paperwork must be on file before boarding a NOAA vessel.

Scheduling Requirements: While every effort is made to schedule the field season months ahead of time, there are inevitable changes due to weather, changes in cost or transportation schedules, etc. Logistics can be quite complicated given the number of variables. While we try to set specific dates, we have many partners to coordinate with, and safety is our number one concern. Volunteers must understand that departure and

arrive dates to and from Honolulu will be estimates. Changes plus or minus two weeks in either direction are frequently encountered; changes plus or minus a month in either direction occur occasionally. Although scheduling changes by 2-3 months are unusual, they have occurred. All personnel on Tern should arrange their obligations to match this level of possible change in schedules.

Accepting the risk of delayed or no evacuation in the event of an emergency: In the event of an emergency, such as serious injury, illness or family emergency, we will make every effort to evacuate effected personnel; however, evacuation may not be timely or even possible for quite some time – even months. ALL PERSONNEL AT REMOTE STATIONS MUST ACCEPT THE RISK OF POTENTIALLY NOT HAVING TIMELY EVACUATION, EVEN IF IT IS NEEDED. Weather, cost, availability of transport, the nature of the emergency, and risk to rescuers must all be considered before any emergency evacuation. Consider this risk seriously before accepting any position at Tern Island.

Although first response (e.g., first aid) will be available in the event of an emergency, slow additional response is an inherent and unavoidable risk in living on a remote island. DO NOT ACCEPT A POSITION AT TERN ISLAND FIELD STATION IF YOU NEED REGULAR MEDICAL ATTENTION OR ASSISTANCE, HAVE ANY CONDITION WHICH HAS REASONABLE EXPECTATION FOR EVACUATION TO BE NEEDED, ARE LIKELY TO NEED MEDICAL ATTENTION OF ANY KIND, OR ARE NOT WILLING TO ACCEPT THE RISK OF POTENTIALLY NOT HAVING AN EVACUATION WHEN NEEDED, INCLUDING ANY CONSEQUENCES OF NO EVACUATION. Again, we will try to evacuate when that is an appropriate course of action, but we cannot guarantee timely evacuation at any time.

Stress in a Remote Environment: Life and work on a remote island can be quite rewarding – but also carries with it a constant low level of stress. Volunteers should be prepared to entertain themselves during off time with reading, exercise, music or other activities. Volunteers should also expect to experience some level of loneliness, particularly for friends and family. There will inevitably be times when you feel left out, or missing your home. These feelings are normal, and for many people, can be dealt with through exercise, good diet, learning a new activity, emailing or Skyping with family, or talking to others on Tern. If you are susceptible to depression or loneliness, or need to be home frequently or for special needs, Tern may best be enjoyed from a distance. Volunteering on a remote island is not for everyone. Feel free to contact the Monument about other ways to participate in Monument public or educational activities.

Be prepared to deal with occasional disagreements between team members, and always conduct yourself professionally. Volunteers frequently form life-long bonds, but not everyone has to like each other. Sometimes we say things that aren't always the best. You do have to function as a professional, however, and get the mission done to the best of everyone's abilities. When you're feeling stressed, remember why you are there, acknowledge the problem, and work around it. Take some time for yourself, or enjoy

special treats or activities that you brought with you. We have a zero tolerance for gross negligence, verbal abuse, threats or harassment of any kind.

Volunteering on Tern: Volunteers on Tern come from all walks of life, from around the globe. If the prospect of no television, limited phone and internet, and no alcohol is not daunting, and the thought of spending six months on an island with the same five to ten other people and a million birds sounds like fun, let us know! For those comfortable in a remote setting, the opportunity is perfect for students, retirees, and those desiring experience with wildlife or the outdoors. Volunteering on Tern is a once-in-a-lifetime experience!

Applicants who are selected as volunteers will be sent a packet of additional information on the island, duties, and suggested items to bring, as well as required forms. These items must be submitted before the volunteer arrives for duty in Honolulu. A current passport is required for transport on vessels to and from the island. A current physical, tetanus shot, and TB test are also required.

We are short in staff and budget, and look to our volunteers to assist us with our conservation goals – and to enhance the personal and professional goals of the volunteers that help us. We may also assist you in obtaining specific experience on island, if the experience is within the scope of current activities on the island, and agreed beforehand. Let us know what you would like to get out of your experience at Tern, professionally and personally, and we will discuss the possibility.

We look forward to meeting you, and working together! Aloha from Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument!